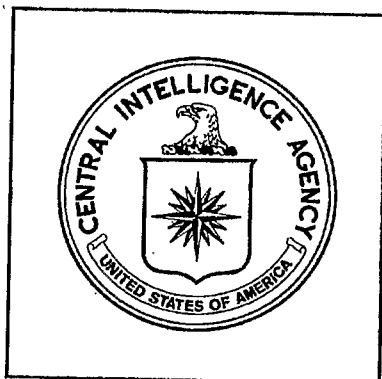


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Latin America

REGIONAL AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

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DIA review(s)
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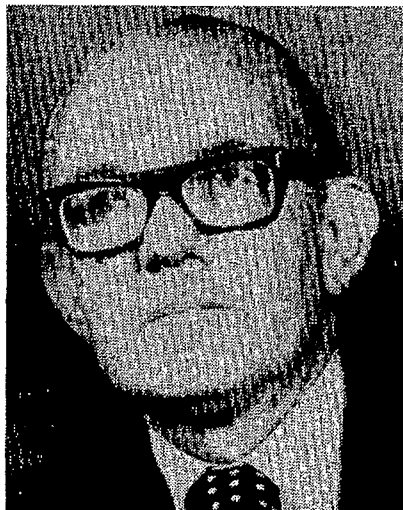
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Colombia: Narcotics Meeting with President Lopez

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2
A US delegation met with President Lopez in Bogota last month to discuss the problem of narcotics-related corruption among Colombian government officials. The meeting-- which was preceded by a series of discussions, briefings, and media coverage of drug trafficking in Colombia--marks another stage in what appears to be steadily improving relations in joint drug control efforts between Washington and Bogota. Political constraints, however, may serve to limit Lopez' effectiveness in dealing with the drug problem.

*President Lopez*

2
1
President Carter's offer to provide President Lopez with evidence compiled by US agencies on official corruption in Colombia was unprecedented. Lopez, who is deeply concerned about the narcotics problem, was receptive to the demarche and very candid during the meeting. After hearing information on cases involving ministerial and judicial officials, military and law enforcement personnel, and other high-level figures, Lopez stated that he planned to set up an elite civilian law enforcement unit to cope with crime and corruption in Colombia. Furthermore, he pledged that finding some way to solve his country's drug problem would be a priority issue during his final year in office.

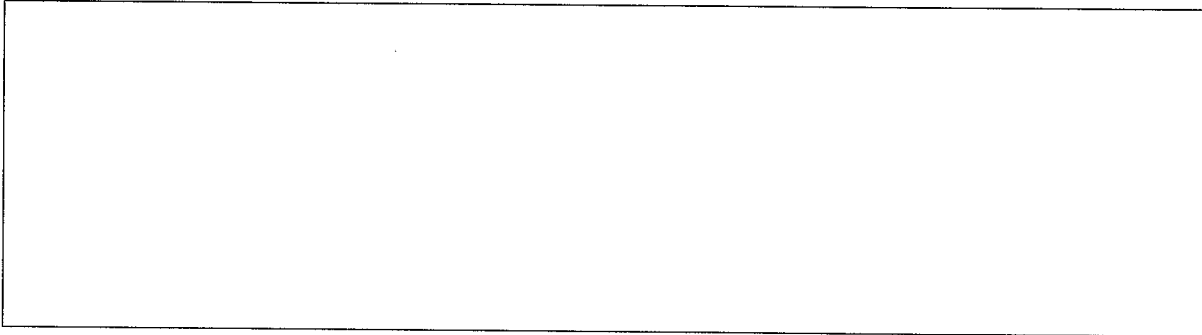
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Lopez outlined some of his intentions regarding reform of Colombia's judicial system. He explained that he had in mind adopting US procedures in which attorneys, rather than judges, would investigate and

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prosecute cases. Lopez also stated that he is considering stationing a narcotics liaison officer in Miami to work with officials of the US Drug Enforcement Administration in investigating Colombian drug smugglers.



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2 Lopez' stated commitment to improve narcotics enforcement in Colombia may facilitate certain bilateral drug-control efforts. A direct assault on the problem of corruption, particularly at higher levels, is unlikely, however, having just weathered a serious scandal that threatened his political position, Lopez will be very reluctant to risk another public outcry against his administration by focusing attention on corrupt officials.

2 Furthermore, his loyalty to the ruling Liberal Party will prevent him from saying or doing anything that would jeopardize the party's chances in the election next year. Lopez' predicament is made all the more difficult because the Liberal Party's leading contender for the presidency is Julio Cesar Turbay--who is alleged to be involved with drug traffickers.

2 The extent to which Lopez can address the drug issue is further circumscribed by the fact that he will soon become a "lame duck." After the primary slated for February, the relationship between Lopez, his party, and the other major political institutions is likely to undergo significant changes as public attention shifts to the Liberal Party candidate and power begins to slip inexorably from the President's grasp.

2 In the face of diminishing authority, Lopez may prove unable to follow through on many of his intentions regarding narcotics control. Even in mid-term, when his political strength was presumably at its peak, Lopez

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seemed powerless to institute effective measures to cope with student unrest, kidnappings, rampant crime, and guerrilla activity--all of which have since continued to escalate.

2 In fact, many former Lopez supporters believe he has failed to do much about a wide range of social, political, and economic goals to which he assigned high priority. The question of corruption, perhaps the main impediment in efforts to resolve the country's other ills, is not likely to be seriously addressed, much less solved, during Lopez' final months in office. At best, Lopez may be able to set some machinery in motion that will be continued by his successor.

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